

CONNECTION

FEBRUARY 2008



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to DRPT's bimonthly newsletter. Expanding upon previous quarterly reports, the Connection will provide

detailed information on Virginia's rail, transit and congestion management initiatives on a more frequent basis. It will provide more insight into DRPT as a state agency with performance information, trends and details on DRPT programs, and it will serve as a resource for our customers and stakeholders by providing updates on important industry issues.

In the February issue, you'll find that construction is underway for Norfolk Light Rail, in addition to \$57 million in rail capacity improvements in the I-81 rail corridor.

In Northern Virginia, DRPT has completed a major Transit/TDM Study that identifies the most viable transit options to be considered for funding through the I-95/I-395 HOT lanes project. We've also expanded our reach in southwestern Virginia by establishing the first DRPT transit office in the Roanoke region.

On the advocacy front, you'll see an update on the latest federal transportation issues and, after the General Assembly session, we'll provide a full overview of the session's impact on transit and rail programs.

I hope that you enjoy the first issue of the expanded Connection. It's just one of several DRPT resources that will be available to you in 2008.

STEPS CLOSER TO RIDING THE TIDE

Only a few short months ago, Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) and the City of Norfolk reached a major milestone for transit in Virginia—breaking ground on construction of The Tide, Virginia's first light rail system. Light rail transit operates on steel rails powered by electricity from overhead wires.

HRT expects that The Tide will encourage transit oriented development and contribute to the economic vitality of Norfolk. Already, developers of three major commercial and residential projects have cited proximity to The Tide as an influence. The Tide will enhance quality of life by increasing mobility, improving job access, decreasing employee travel costs, and providing a viable transportation alternative to driving alone.

Utility relocation began in December, and in January work began on the elevated portion of the system between Harbor Park and Norfolk State University. This first construction phase will initiate environmental mitigation, bridge construction and civil/track work along Norfolk Southern right of way. The next phase will cover the installation of traffic signals, fare collection and electrical power systems in downtown Norfolk and will also include the construction of park-and-ride lots and the Vehicle Storage and Maintenance Facility.

HRT is keeping the public informed during the construction process. The Tide on Granby, a public outreach office, is now open and people can stop by to find the most up-to-date information on The Tide and other HRT services.

Upon completion in 2010, The Tide will have 11 stations over 7.4 miles and will carry 6,000 – 12,000 passengers a day from the Eastern Virginia Medical Center through downtown Norfolk to the city line at Newtown Road. The Tide in Norfolk is the first leg of light rail in the Hampton Roads region and is expected to grow, creating more vibrant, connected communities in the future. Visit www.ridethetide.com for more information.



CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON I-81 RAIL IMPROVEMENTS

In February, DRPT signed a \$57 million contract with Norfolk Southern for rail improvement projects in the I-81 corridor.

These improvements will remove nearly 600,000 trucks from Virginia's highways and provide additional passenger rail capacity for the potential expansion of VRE service in the Gainesville/Haymarket area. The project focuses on the most congested portion of the I-81 rail corridor between Manassas and Front Royal along I-66. This portion of the line has limited opportunities for trains to pass each other and no signal system to control rail traffic today. Scheduled for completion in late 2008, these improvements between Manassas and Front Royal will provide additional passing sidings and signal system enhancements to modernize the rail system.



FIRST TRANSIT PERFORMANCE REPORT ISSUED

DRPT has completed its first annual Virginia Transit Performance Report to provide improved information on system performance and increase accountability for DRPT and transit operators. Results for FY2006 indicate that ridership grew 20 percent, transit miles operated grew 20 percent, and Virginia transit systems have a lower operating cost per trip than the national average and neighboring states. DRPT will begin collecting data for the FY2007 report in the coming months. The report is available online at www.drpt.virginia.gov.



I-66 CORRIDOR STUDY UNDERWAY

DRPT has initiated work on a major transit study in Northern Virginia for the I-66 corridor, both inside and outside the Beltway. The study will consider Bus Rapid Transit and other innovative transit solutions to reduce traffic congestion in this key corridor.

DRPT DEVELOPS STATEWIDE RAIL PLAN



DRPT is developing the Statewide Rail Plan for Virginia to provide a clear strategy for short and long term passenger and freight rail improvements across the state. Scheduled for completion in summer 2008,

this document will include an actionable plan for rail improvements over the next six years in addition to a longer term vision for the twenty-year planning horizon.

HUMAN SERVICE WORKSHOPS COMPLETED

In January, DRPT completed the second round of human service workshops with local planning district commissions to help transit providers comply with SAFETEA-LU requirements when applying for federal New Freedom or Job Access and Reverse Commute grants. The workshops focused on overcoming the current gaps in transit service for the elderly and disabled. The final round of workshops will be held this spring/summer. They will help localities implement strategies identified in previous workshops and integrate local plans into the statewide human service transportation plan.



I-95/I-395 TRANSIT/TDM STUDY ISSUED

DRPT evaluated over 60 strategies for transit, carpooling and telework improvements along the I-95/I-395 corridor to develop a set of strategies for implementation with potential revenues from the I-95/I-395 HOV/Bus/HOT Lanes Project. The recommended package of transit, carpooling and telework strategies includes modifying existing bus service, implementing new Bus Rapid Transit service, expanding and adding new park and ride lots, adding railcars to Virginia Railway Express (VRE), improving Metrorail and VRE facilities, and providing incentives for carpooling, vanpooling and telework.



DID YOU KNOW...

- In Northern Virginia, 20.7 percent of commuters are teleworking.
- DRPT has created a new Web site section devoted to training opportunities. View courses by category, read course descriptions and register for courses of interest online at www.drpt.virginia.gov/events/otc.
- Rail Preservation programs removed 1.25 million trucks off Virginia highways in FY2007.
- Ever wonder who you should turn to at DRPT if you have a question? See the technical assistance feature on the web site at www.drpt.virginia.gov for a complete listing of key contacts for DRPT grantees.

DRPT PERFORMANCE

DRPT, through the performance of the agency's grantees, met or exceeded all performance measures for Virginia Performs, the Commonwealth's program to gather and report on agency performance, for the 2007 fiscal year! Highlights include:

- Increasing passenger trips per person in urbanized areas from 23.29 to 24.14 trips per person
- Increasing passenger trips on transit systems in rural areas from 1,180,002 to 1,685,315 trips
- Increasing the number of vehicle miles saved by customers of commuter assistance agencies from 22,077,000 to 24,869,500 vehicle miles saved

To see all of DRPT's performance measures online, visit www.vaperforms.virginia.gov.

INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY—THE DRPT DASHBOARD



In response to the emphasis on accountability in state government, DRPT is developing an online Dashboard to report on agency performance. Since DRPT is the state agency for rail, transit and congestion management in Virginia, the Dashboard will focus on the impact of DRPT's programs through indicators such as transit ridership and the number of cars/trucks removed from highways through DRPT programs. Reporting information will be provided based on information received from rail and transit operators as well as federal reporting data. The Dashboard will be available on DRPT's website in summer 2008.


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FEDERAL NEWS

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- Congress has enacted a \$555 billion Omnibus Spending Bill, including \$9.492 billion for transit. Provisions include \$823 million for the Bus and Bus Facilities Program, \$1.57 billion for the New Starts/Small Starts Capital Investment Program and \$400 million for transit and rail security assistance. In addition, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has been directed to review the condition of the nation's commuter rail systems to determine necessary resources for improvements.
 - The US Senate passed S.294, which would authorize federal funding to operate and develop intercity passenger rail service, enhance security and reauthorize Amtrak for six years. It includes a new State Capital Grant program for intercity passenger rail capital projects. The House T & I committee hopes to bring a similar bill forward in late March.
 - The FTA provided a \$1.9 million grant to APTA to develop new industry vehicle procurement standards to allow transportation providers to buy safer, more efficient and accessible railcars and buses at reasonable prices.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Ongoing** State Employee Terrorism and Security Awareness Orientation Program Online course: www.drpt.virginia.gov/events/otc (sponsored by DRPT)
- 2/16** Lessons Learned: Fairfax Connector Bus Barricade Richmond, Virginia (sponsored by DRPT)
- 3/9-11** APTA Legislative Conference Washington, D.C.
- 3/10-11** AASHTO Standing Committee on Rail Transportation, Washington, D.C.
- 3/11-14** Securing Community Mobility Course Charlottesville, Virginia (sponsored by DRPT)
- 3/19** NTI Terrorist Activity Recognition and Reaction Course, Purcellville, Virginia (sponsored by DRPT)
- 4/6-19** AASHTO National Transportation Leadership Institute, Indianapolis, Indiana
- 4/26** CTAV Driving Rodeo Williamsburg, Virginia (sponsored by DRPT)